

## Focus on Niche...Then Extend

A good idea to build up an organization is to start from a niche market, and then expand from there by looking for variations on the basic products/services that would attract a broader range of customers. This is true for both for-profit organizations and not-for-profit ones.

### I. The Niche Market

The niche, which defines the specific product aimed at satisfying specific market needs, is where to build the base and where to expand. The large market pie could be sliced into smaller segments, referred to as niche, in terms of product/service type, quality, price, demographics, etc. By seeking out smaller segments, an organization could provide unique products/services to target audience and usually gain loyal customer base.

Kids Up Front Foundation started from a niche market—they are the only charity in the city that provides experiences for underprivileged children and youth through the distribution of unused event tickets. While most of the child-serving charitable agencies provide food, shelter, clothing and counselling, Kids Up Front provides nourishment of the spirit through gifted tickets for a variety of categories of events.

### II. Expansion

Once the organization has a strong base, it steps to the phase of expansion. There are a number of alternatives expansion strategies, among which are horizontal and vertical expansion. Horizontal expansion is more about growth by expanding more of what is

currently doing, such as expanding geographically and providing more variations on products/services. (Todrin) In our case, Kids Up Front is expanding geographically, and providing a broader range of donation programs and donation types.

Founded in Calgary in 2000, Kids Up Front Foundation created phenomenal successes in two years. Continuing on the successes, three more Kids Up Front Foundations were formed in Edmonton, Vancouver and Toronto from 2003 to 2006. In 2006, Kids up Front Foundation (Canada) was incorporated in Calgary as a public foundation to support the work of the regional Kids Up Front programs, and to protect the integrity, ethical conduct, policies and procedures, financial accountability, and program intent. The achievements of Kids Up Front in terms of geographical expansion should be fully affirmed.

Kids Up Front are also working on gaining more support corporate, public communities and events organization by offering a broader range of donation programs and donation types. Donors could join the “Can’t Use Your Ticket?” program and donate tickets, and they could join the “Kids Count!” to help host special “signature” events for the kids, like a skating party. Corporate donors could provide financial donation through long-term commitment and matching funds. Planned giving through financial instruments, such as securities, annuities, and remainder trusts, are also accepted. Also, the donors could sponsor specific activities, such as sponsoring 10 families to a Famous Players or Odeon Theatre movie.

At present, the corporation and event organizer take up a large proportion of the donation, whether in terms of tickets or money. It is predicable that Kids Up Front is not

very well-acquainted with the general public. The reasons behind this are: 1) the tickets distributed or events held are always through partnership with other child-serving charitable agencies; and 2) the Kids Up Front did not make great effort on promoting their brand. Therefore, we could say that there is still great potential for Kids Up Front in delivering more branding impact.

**Overall, we give 4.5 out of 5 on this critical success factor.**